



Best Instructional Practices for English Language Learners : A Program Evaluation

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Significance: In the wake of multiple educational reform initiatives, districts are pressed to provide Professional Development to maintain teacher quality while meeting the needs of a broadening student population. New reforms include high standards in curriculum and assessments for all students. The need for effective professional development to support teachers has increased with the shifts in diversity of student population and current demands in curriculum.

Purpose: Stamford Public Schools’ host approximately 2000 ELL students. The purpose of this study is to evaluate a professional development program designed specifically for the district to increase teachers’ knowledge of instruction specific to English Language Learners (ELLs) and make the delivery of that instruction common across all grades and schools.

Intervention Program: The ELL Program was carried out in two phases. Phase 1: In 2014, all identified ELLs in Grades K-12 began to receive common hours of English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction and Sheltered Content instruction based on their level of English Language Acquisition (see Table). Phase 2: As of 2014, all Stamford Public School teachers and administrators attend the professional development program Best Instructional Practices for English Language Learners. Completion of this training program required participation in eight modules that were delivered during 60 hours of training. Once training was completed, teachers could deliver sheltered instruction hours to ELLs.

LAS Level	Hours of ESL Instruction	Hours of Sheltered Instruction
1	40 – 60 mins daily	40 – 60 mins daily
2	40 – 60 mins daily	40 – 60 mins daily
3	40 – 60 mins daily	40 – 60 mins daily
4	2.5 hours weekly	40 – 60 mins daily
5	2.5 hours weekly	2.5 hours weekly

Proposed Study: Using a pragmatist approach, a Program Evaluation will be conducted on the 13 elementary schools in Stamford to determine the impact of the ELL Program on teachers and students. The purpose and scope of the evaluation will be met through the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. Data will be analyzed to determine if the coaching received during Best Instructional Practices for English Language Learners impacts teachers’ understanding of instruction for ELLs, and ELLs’ academic performance. Qualitative data will include interviews, observations, and questionnaires. Quantitative data will include demographic and scaled attitude surveys, and ELL student performance scores. The pragmatist approach to a Program Evaluation of the ELL Program is appropriate considering the framework of the two components of the intervention. Pragmatism allows the researcher to focus on “what works” when discovering truths in regards to the research questions. This study will provide an opportunity to examine the process and causality as it will measure the specific instructional strategies that lead to certain outcomes. The instructional strategies taught in the training program are based Stephen Krashen’s theories of Second Language Acquisition and Comprehensible Input. Literature will show how the various hypotheses that contribute to these theories serve as a theoretical background for this study.

Guiding Research Questions: What impact does the ELL program have on teachers and ELLs in the Stamford Public Elementary Schools? What components of the intervention have a causal effect on the teachers and ELLs in Stamford Public Elementary Schools?

Outcomes and Implications: This study of the ELL Program in the Stamford Public Elementary Schools will provide insight to the impact of the program on teachers’ instruction and students’ academic achievement. Analysis will identify causal relationships between components of the program and outcomes of its delivery. This information will support the future design of curriculum, instruction, and support for ELLs in the Stamford Public Schools.